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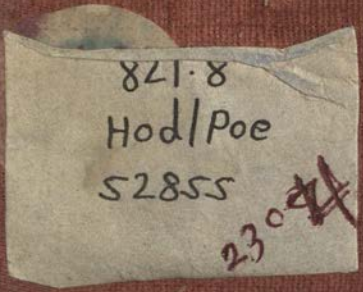
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THE
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TORON

POEMS

52855

BY

RALPH HODGSON

MACMILLAN AND CO., LIMITED
ST. MARTIN'S STREET, LONDON
1917

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TO

MY MOTHER

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THE GIPSY GIRL

"COME, try your skill, kind gentlemen,
A penny for three tries!"
Some threw and lost, some threw and won
A ten-a-penny prize.

She was a tawny gipsy girl,
A girl of twenty years,
I liked her for the lumps of gold
That jingled from her ears;

I liked the flaring yellow scarf
Bound loose about her throat,
I liked her showy purple gown
And flashy velvet coat.

A man came up, too loose of tongue,
And said no good to her:
She did not blush as Saxons do.
Or turn upon the cur:

She fawned and whined "Sweet gentleman,
A penny for three tries!"
—But oh, the den of wild things in
The darkness of her eyes!

A SONG

With Love among the haycocks
We played at hide and seek;

He shut his eyes and counted—
We hid among the hay—
Then he a haycock mounted,
And spied us where we lay;

And O! the merry laughter
Across the hayfield after!

TIME, YOU OLD GIPSY MAN

TIME, you old gipsy man,
Will you not stay,
Put up your caravan
Just for one day?

All things I'll give you
Will you be my guest,
Bells for your jennet
Of silver the best,
Goldsmiths shall beat you
A great golden ring,
Peacocks shall bow to you,
Little boys sing,
Oh, and sweet girls will
Festoon you with may,
Time, you old gipsy,
Why hasten away?

TIME

Last week in Babylon,
Last night in Rome,
Morning, and in the crush
Under Paul's dome;
Under Paul's dial
You tighten your rein—
Only a moment,
And off once again;
Off to some city
Now blind in the womb,
Off to another
Ere that's in the tomb.

Time, you old gipsy man,
  Will you not stay,
Put up your caravan
  Just for one day?

GHOUL CARE

Sour fiend, go home and tell the Pit
For once you met your master,—
A man who carried in his soul
Three charms against disaster,
The Devil and disaster.

Away, away, and tell the tale
And start your whelps a-whining,
Say "In the greenwood of his soul
A lizard's eye was shining,
A little eye kept shining."

Away, away, and salve your sores,
And set your hags a-groaning,
Say "In the greenwood of his soul
A drowsy bee was droning,
A dreamy bee was droning."

GHOUL CARE

Prodigious Bat! Go start the walls
Of Hell with horror ringing,
Say "In the greenwood of his soul
There was a goldfinch singing,
A pretty goldfinch singing."

And then come back, come, if you please,
A fiercer ghoul and ghaster,
With all the glooms and smuts of Hell
Behind you, I'm your master!
You know I'm still your master.

EVE

Eve, with her basket, was
Deep in the bells and grass
Wading in bells and grass
Up to her knees,
Picking a dish of sweet
Berries and plums to eat,
Down in the bells and grass
Under the trees.

Mute as a mouse in a
Corner the cobra lay,
Curled round a bough of the
Cinnamon tall. . . .
Now to get even and
Humble proud heaven and
Now was the moment or
Never at all.

EVE

"Eva!" Each syllable
Light as a flower fell,
"Eva!" he whispered the
Wondering maid,
Soft as a bubble sung
Out of a linnet's lung,
Soft and most silverly
"Eva!" he said.

Picture that orchard sprite,
Eve, with her body white,
Supple and smooth to her
Slim finger tips,
Wondering, listening,
Listening, wondering,
Eve with a berry
Half-way to her lips.

Oh had our simple Eve
Seen through the make-believe!
Had she but known the
Pretender he was!
Out of the boughs he came,
Whispering still her name,

Tumbling in twenty rings
Into the grass.

Here was the strangest pair
In the world anywhere,
Eve in the bells and grass
Kneeling, and he
Telling his story low. . . .
Singing birds saw them go
Down the dark path to
The Blasphemous Tree.

Oh what a clatter when
Titmouse and Jenny Wren
Saw him successful and
Taking his leave!
How the birds rated him,
How they all hated him!
How they all pitied
Poor motherless Eve!

Picture her crying
Outside in the lane,
Eve, with no dish of sweet
Berries and plums to eat,

Haunting the gate of the
Orchard in vain. . . .
Picture the lewd delight
Under the hill to-night—
"Eva!" the toast goes round,
"Eva!" again.

THE SONG OF HONOUR

I CLIMBED a hill as light fell short,
And rooks came home in scramble sort,
And filled the trees and flapped and fought
And sang themselves to sleep ;
An owl from nowhere with no sound
Swung by and soon was nowhere found,
I heard him calling half-way round,
Holloing loud and deep ;
A pair of stars, faint pins of light,
Then many a star, sailed into sight,
And all the stars, the flower of night,

Were round me at a leap;
To tell how still the valleys lay
I heard a watchdog miles away,
And bells of distant sheep.

I heard no more of bird or bell,
The mastiff in a slumber fell,
I stared into the sky,
As wondering men have always done
Since beauty and the stars were one,
Though none so hard as I.

It seemed, so still the valleys were,
As if the whole world knelt at prayer,
Save me and me alone;
So pure and wide that silence was
I feared to bend a blade of grass,
And there I stood like stone.

There, sharp and sudden, there I heard—
Ah! some wild lovesick singing bird
Woke singing in the trees?
The nightingale and babble-wren
Were in the English greenwood then,
And you heard one of these?

The babble-wren and nightingale
Sang in the Abyssinian vale
That season of the year!
Yet, true enough, I heard them plain,
I heard them both again, again,
As sharp and sweet and clear
As if the Abyssinian tree
Had thrust a bough across the sea,
Had thrust a bough across to me
With music for my ear!

THE SONG OF HONOUR

I heard them both, and oh! I heard
The song of every singing bird
That sings beneath the sky,
And with the song of lark and wren
The song of mountains, moths and men
And seas and rainbows vie!

I heard the universal choir,
The Sons of Light exalt their Sire
With universal song,
Earth's lowliest and loudest notes,
Her million times ten million throats
Exalt Him loud and long,
And lips and lungs and tongues of Grace
From every part and every place
Within the shining of His face,
The universal throng.

THE SONG OF HONOUR

I heard the hymn of being sound
From every well of honour found
In human sense and soul:
The song of poets when they write
The testament of Beautysprite
Upon a flying scroll,
The song of painters when they take
A burning brush for Beauty's sake
And limn her features whole—

The song of men divinely wise
Who look and see in starry skies
Not stars so much as robins' eyes,
And when these pale away
Hear flocks of shiny pleiades
Among the plums and apple trees
Sing in the summer day—

THE SONG OF HONOUR

The song of all both high and low
To some blest vision true,
The song of beggars when they throw
The crust of pity all men owe
To hungry sparrows in the snow,
Old beggars hungry too—
The song of kings of kingdoms when
They rise above their fortune Men,
And crown themselves anew—

The song of courage, heart and will
And gladness in a fight,
Of men who face a hopeless hill
With sparking and delight,
The bells and bells of song that ring
Round banners of a cause or king
From armies bleeding white—

THE SONG OF HONOUR

The song of sailors every one
When monstrous tide and tempest run
At ships like bulls at red,
When stately ships are twirled and spun
Like whipping tops and help there's none
And mighty ships ten thousand ton
Go down like lumps of lead—

And song of fighters stern as they
At odds with fortune night and day,
Crammed up in cities grim and grey
As thick as bees in hives,
Hosannas of a lowly throng
Who sing unconscious of their song,
Whose lips are in their lives—

And song of some at holy war
With spells and ghouls more dread
by far
Than deadly seas and cities are
Or hordes of quarrelling kings—
The song of fighters great and small,
The song of pretty fighters all
And high heroic things—

The song of lovers—who knows how
Twitched up from place and time
Upon a sigh, a blush, a vow,
A curve or hue of cheek or brow,
Borne up and off from here and now
Into the void sublime!

And crying loves and passions still
In every key from soft to shrill
And numbers never done,
Dog-loyalties to faith and friend,
And loves like Ruth's of old no end,
And intermission none—

And burst on burst for beauty and
For numbers not behind,
From men whose love of motherland
Is like a dog's for one dear hand,
Sole, selfless, boundless, blind—
And song of some with hearts beside
For men and sorrows far and wide,
Who watch the world with pity and
pride
And warm to all mankind—

And endless joyous music rise
From children at their play,
And endless soaring lullabies
From happy, happy mothers' eyes,
And answering crows and baby-cries,
How many who shall say!
And many a song as wondrous well
With pangs and sweets intolerable
From lonely hearths too grey to tell,
God knows how utter grey!
And song from many a house of care
When pain has forced a footing there
And there's a Darkness on the stair
Will not be turned away—

And song—that song whose singers
come
With old kind tales of pity from
The Great Compassion's lips,
That make the bells of Heaven to
peal
Round pillows frosty with the feel
Of Death's cold finger tips—

The song of men all sorts and kinds,
As many tempers, moods and minds
As leaves are on a tree,
As many faiths and castes and creeds,
As many human bloods and breeds
As in the world may be;

The song of each and all who gaze
On Beauty in her naked blaze,
Or see her dimly in a haze,
Or get her light in fitful rays
And tiniest needles even,
The song of all not wholly dark,
Not wholly sunk in stupor stark
Too deep for groping Heaven—

And alleluias sweet and clear
And wild with beauty men mishear,
From choirs of song as near and dear
To Paradise as they,
The everlasting pipe and flute
Of wind and sea and bird and brute,
And lips deaf men imagine mute
In wood and stone and clay:

The music of a lion strong
That shakes a hill a whole night long,
A hill as loud as he,
The twitter of a mouse among
Melodious greenery,
The ruby's and the rainbow's song,
The nightingale's—all three,
The song of life that wells and flows
From every leopard, lark and rose
And everything that gleams or goes
Lack-lustre in the sea.

I heard it all, each, every note
Of every lung and tongue and throat,
Ay, every rhythm and rhyme
Of everything that lives and loves
And upward, ever upward moves
From lowly to sublime!
Earth's multitudinous Sons of Light,
I heard them lift their lyric might
With each and every chanting sprite
That lit the sky that wondrous night
As far as eye could climb!

I heard it all, I heard the whole
Harmonious hymn of being roll
Up through the chapel of my soul
And at the altar die,
And in the awful quiet then
Myself I heard, Amen, Amen,
Amen I heard me cry!
I heard it all and then although
I caught my flying senses, Oh,
A dizzy man was I!
I stood and stared; the sky was lit,
The sky was stars all over it,

THE SONG OF HONOUR

I stood, I knew not why,
Without a wish, without a will,
I stood upon that silent hill
And stared into the sky until
My eyes were blind with stars and still
I stared into the sky.

THE MYSTERY

He came and took me by the hand
  Up to a red rose tree,
He kept His meaning to Himself
  But gave a rose to me.

I did not pray Him to lay bare
  The mystery to me,
Enough the rose was Heaven to smell,
  And His own face to see.

STUPIDITY STREET

I SAW with open eyes
Singing birds sweet
Sold in the shops
For the people to eat,
Sold in the shops of
Stupidity Street.

I saw in vision
The worm in the wheat,
And in the shops nothing
For people to eat;
Nothing for sale in
Stupidity Street.

THE BELLS OF HEAVEN

'Twould ring the bells of Heaven
The wildest peal for years,
If Parson lost his senses
And people came to theirs,
And he and they together
Knelt down with angry prayers
For tamed and shabby tigers
And dancing dogs and bears,
And wretched, blind pit ponies,
And little hunted hares.

THE JOURNEYMAN

Not baser than his own homekeeping kind
Whose journeyman he is—
Blind sons and breastless daughters of the blind
Whose darkness pardons his,—
About the world, while all the world approves,
The pimp of Fashion steals,
With all the angels mourning their dead loves
Behind his bloody heels.

It may be late when Nature cries Enough!
As one day cry she will,
And man may have the wit to put her off
With shifts a season still;

But man may find the pinch importunate
And fall to blaming men—
Blind sires and breastless mothers of his fate,
It may be late and may be very late,
Too late for blaming then.

THE BULL

SEE an old unhappy bull,
Sick in soul and body both,
Slouching in the undergrowth
Of the forest beautiful,
Banished from the herd he led,
Bulls and cows a thousand head.

Cranes and gaudy parrots go
Up and down the burning sky;
Tree-top cats purr drowsily
In the dim-day green below;
And troops of monkeys, nutting, some,
All disputing, go and come;

And things abominable sit
Picking offal buck or swine,
On the mess and over it
Burnished flies and beetles shine,
And spiders big as bladders lie
Under hemlocks ten foot high;

And a dotted serpent curled
Round and round and round a tree,
Yellowing its greenery,
Keeps a watch on all the world,
All the world and this old bull
In the forest beautiful.

Bravely by his fall he came:
One he led, a bull of blood
Newly come to lustihood,
Fought and put his prince to shame,
Snuffed and pawed the prostrate head
Tameless even while it bled.

There they left him, every one,
Left him there without a lick,
Left him for the birds to pick,
Left him there for carrion,
Vilely from their bosom cast
Wisdom, worth and love at last.

When the lion left his lair
And roared his beauty through the hills,
And the vultures pecked their quills
And flew into the middle air,
Then this prince no more to reign
Came to life and lived again.

He snuffed the herd in far retreat,
He saw the blood upon the ground,
And snuffed the burning airs around
Still with beevish odours sweet,
While the blood ran down his head
And his mouth ran slaver red.

THE BULL

Pity him, this fallen chief,
All his splendour, all his strength,
All his body's breadth and length
Dwindled down with shame and grief,
Half the bull he was before,
Bones and leather, nothing more.

See him standing dewlap-deep
In the rushes at the lake,
Surly, stupid, half asleep,
Waiting for his heart to break
And the birds to join the flies
Feasting at his bloodshot eyes;

Standing with his head hung down
In a stupor, dreaming things:
Green savannas, jungles brown,
Battlefields and bellowings,
Bulls undone and lions dead
And vultures flapping overhead.

THE BULL

Dreaming things: of days he spent
With his mother gaunt and lean
In the valley warm and green,
Full of baby wonderment,
Blinking out of silly eyes
At a hundred mysteries;

Dreaming over once again
How he wandered with a throng
Of bulls and cows a thousand strong,
Wandered on from plain to plain,
Up the hill and down the dale,
Always at his mother's tail;

How he lagged behind the herd,
Lagged and tottered, weak of limb,
And she turned and ran to him
Blaring at the loathly bird
Stationed always in the skies,
Waiting for the flesh that dies.

THE BULL

Dreaming maybe of a day
When her drained and drying paps
Turned him to the sweets and saps,
Richer fountains by the way,
And she left the bull she bore
And he looked to her no more;

And his little frame grew stout,
And his little legs grew strong,
And the way was not so long;
And his little horns came out,
And he played at butting trees
And boulder-stones and tortoises,

Joined a game of knobby skulls
With the youngsters of his year,
All the other little bulls,
Learning both to bruise and bear,
Learning how to stand a shock
Like a little bull of rock.

THE BULL

Dreaming of a day less dim,
Dreaming of a time less far,
When the faint but certain star
Of destiny burned clear for him,
And a fierce and wild unrest
Broke the quiet of his breast,

And the gristles of his youth
Hardened in his comely pow,
And he came to fighting growth,
Beat his bull and won his cow,
And flew his tail and trampled off
Past the tallest, vain enough,

And curved about in splendour full
And curved again and snuffed the airs
As who should say Come out who dares!
And all beheld a bull, a Bull,
And knew that here was surely one
That backed for no bull, fearing none.

And the leader of the herd
Looked and saw, and beat the ground,
And shook the forest with his sound,
Bellowed at the loathly bird
Stationed always in the skies,
Waiting for the flesh that dies.

Dreaming, this old bull forlorn,
Surely dreaming of the hour
When he came to sultan power,
And they owned him master-horn,
Chiefest bull of all among
Bulls and cows a thousand strong;

And in all the tramping herd
Not a bull that barred his way,
Not a cow that said him nay,
Not a bull or cow that erred
In the furnace of his look
Dared a second, worse rebuke;

THE BULL

Not in all the forest wide,
Jungle, thicket, pasture, fen,
Not another dared him then,
Dared him and again defied;
Not a sovereign buck or boar
Came a second time for more;

Not a serpent that survived
Once the terrors of his hoof
Risked a second time reproof,
Came a second time and lived,
Not a serpent in its skin
Came again for discipline;

Not a leopard bright as flame,
Flashing fingerhooks of steel
That a wooden tree might feel,
Met his fury once and came
For a second reprimand,
Not a leopard in the land;

Not a lion of them all,
Not a lion of the hills,
Hero of a thousand kills,
Dared a second fight and fall,
Dared that ram terrific twice,
Paid a second time the price.

Pity him, this dupe of dream,
Leader of the herd again
Only in his daft old brain,
Once again the bull supreme
And bull enough to bear the part
Only in his tameless heart.

Pity him that he must wake;
Even now the swarm of flies
Blackening his bloodshot eyes
Bursts and blusters round the lake,
Scattered from the feast half-fed,
By great shadows overhead;

And the dreamer turns away
From his visionary herds
And his splendid yesterday,
Turns to meet the loathly birds
Flocking round him from the skies,
Waiting for the flesh that dies.

PLAYMATES

It's sixty years ago, the people say :
Two village children, neighbours born and bred,
One morning played beneath a rotten tree
That came down crash and caught them as they fled ;
And one was killed and one was left unhurt
Except for certain fancies in his head.

And though it's all so very long ago
He's never left the wood a single day ;
I've often met him peeping through the leaves
And chuckling to himself, an old man grey ;

And once he started in his cracked
old voice:
"We're playing I'm a merchant lost
his way,
She's robbers in the wood behind
yon tree,
The minute we grow up too big to
play"——

THE HOUSE ACROSS THE WAY

THE leaves looked in at the window
Of the house across the way,
At a man that had sinned like you and me
And all poor human clay.

He muttered: "In a gambol
I took my soul astray,
But to-morrow I'll drag it back from danger,
In the morning, come what may;
For no man knows what season
He shall go his ghostly way."
And his face fell down upon the table,
And where it fell it lay.

THE HOUSE

And the wind blew under the carpet
And it said, or it seemed to say:
"Truly, all men must go a-ghosting
And no man knows his day."
And the leaves stared in at the window
Like the people at a play.

THE BEGGAR

He begged and shuffled on;
Sometimes he stopped to throw
A bit and benison
To sparrows in the snow,
And clap a frozen ear
And curse the bitter cold.
God send the good man cheer
And quittal hundredfold.

BABYLON

If you could bring her glories back!
You gentle sirs who sift the dust
And burrow in the mould and must
Of Babylon for bric-a-brac;
Who catalogue and pigeon-hole
The faded splendours of her soul
And put her greatness under glass-
If you could bring her past to pass!

If you could bring her dead to life!
The soldier lad; the market wife;
Madam buying fowls from her;
Tip, the butcher's bandy cur;
Workmen carting bricks and clay;
Babel passing to and fro
On the business of a day
Gone three thousand years ago-

BABYLON

That you cannot; then be done,
Put the goblet down again,
Let the broken arch remain,
Leave the dead men's dust alone——

Is it nothing how she lies,
This old mother of you all,
You great cities proud and tall
Towering to a hundred skies
Round a world she never knew,
Is it nothing, this, to you?
Must the ghoulish work go on
Till her very floors are gone?
While there's still a brick to save
Drive these people from her grave

The Jewish seer when he cried
Woe to Babel's lust and pride
Saw the foxes at her gates;
Once again the wild thing waits.
Then leave her in her last decay
A house of owls, a foxes' den;
The desert that till yesterday
Hid her from the eyes of men
In its proper time and way
Will take her to itself again.

THE MOOR

THE world's gone forward to its latest fair
And dropt an old man done with by the way,
To sit alone among the bats and stare
At miles and miles and miles of moorland bare
Lit only with last shreds of dying day.

Not all the world, not all the world's gone by:
Old man, you're like to meet one traveller still,
A journeyman well kenned for courtesy

To all that walk at odds with life
and limb;
If this be he now riding up the hill
Maybe he'll stop and take you up
with him. . . .

"But thou art Death?" "Of
Heavenly Seraphim
None else to seek thee out and bid
thee come."
"I only care that thou art come from
Him,
Unbody me—I'm tired—and get me
home."

FEBRUARY

A FEW tossed thrushes save
That carolled less than cried
Against the dying rave
And moan that never died,
No bird sang then; no thorn,
No tree was green beside
Them only never shorn—
The few by all the winds
And chill mutations born
Of Winter's many minds
Abused and whipt in vain—
Swarth yew and ivy kinds
And iron breeds germane

THE LATE, LAST ROOK

THE old gilt vane and spire receive
The last beam eastward striking;
The first shy bat to peep at eve
Has found her to his liking.
The western heaven is dull and grey,
The last red glow has followed day.

The late, last rook is housed and will
With cronies lie till morrow;
If there's a rook loquacious still
In dream he hunts a furrow,
And flaps behind a spectre team,
Or ghostly scarecrows walk his dream.

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THE BIRDCATCHER

WHEN flighting time is on I go
With clap-net and decoy,
A-fowling after goldfinches
And other birds of joy;

I lurk among the thickets of
The Heart where they are bred,
And catch the twittering beauties as
They fly into my Head.

THE ROYAL MAILS

For all its flowers and trailing bowers
Its singing birds and streams,
This valley's not the blissful spot,
The paradise, it seems.

I don't forget a man I met
Beneath this very tree,—
The cooing of that cushat dove
Brings back his face to me,—
The merest lad, a sullen, sad,
Unhappy soul with eyes half mad,
Most sorrowful to see.

I asked him who he was, and what;
'Twas his affair, he answered, that,
And had no more to say;
'Twas all I'd feared, the tale I heard,
When he at last gave way.

I've not forgot the look he shot
Me through and through with then;
"What loathly land is this!" he cried,
And cursed it for a countryside
Where devils masque as men.

I thought at first his brain was burst,
So senselessly he cried and cursed
And spat with rage and hate;
He writhed to hear the glossy dove
In song among the boughs above
Beside its gentle mate.

His fury passed away at last,
And when his reason came
He told me he was city bred,
A page about the Court he said,
And coloured up with shame;
It made him wince to own Prince
Of very famous fame.

"He looked for one with speed and strength
And youth, and picked on me at length
And ordered me to stand
Prepared to leave at break of day,
With letters naught must long delay,
For certain cities far away
Across this lonely land.

"He told me all the roads to take
And cautioned me to go
With ears and eyes and wits awake,
Alert from top to toe,
For spies and thieves wore out most
shoes
Upon the roads that I must use,
As he had cause to know.

"I took my cloak as morning broke
And started down the hill,
With Castle-bells and Fare-ye-wells
And bugles sweet and shrill—
Sir Woodman, though it's months ago,
I hear that music still.

"What matters now or ever how
I made the journey here!
I fed on berries from the bough,
Abundant everywhere,
Or if it failed, that luscious meat,
I dug up roots that wild hogs eat
And flourished on the fare;
At night I made a grassy bed
And went to sleep without a dread
And woke without a care—

"No matter how I managed now,
It all went well enough,
Until I saw this spot, I vow,
No man was better off.

"Last night as I came down this vale
In wind and rain full blast,
I turned about to hear a shout
Ho, master, whither so fast!

"A minute more and half a score
Of men were at my side,
Plain merchants all, they said they were,
And camping in a thicket near,
'Remain with us!' they cried.

"'Remain with us, our board is spread
With cheer the best, Ah, stay,' they said,
'Why go so proudly by!'
And there and then my legs were lead,
A weary man was I!

"They stared with wonder that I walked
These tangled hills and dales, and talked
Of better roads at hand,
Smooth roads without a hill to climb
A man could walk in half the time,
The finest in the land,
With more,—but most of it I lost
Or did not understand.

"'So, come,' they cried, 'our tents are tight,
Our fires are burning warm and bright!
How shall we let you go to night
Without offending heaven!'
Come, leave you shall with morning light,
Strong with the strength of seven!'

"True men they seemed, for me I dreamed
No whit of their design,
Their mildness would have clapped a hood
On sharper eyes than mine;
Ay, me they pressed awhile to rest,
Persuaded me to be their guest,
And stole the letters from my breast
When I fell down with wine!

"It all came crowding on my mind
With morning when I woke to find
How blind and blind and utter blind
And blind again I'd been;
Both tents and men had vanished then,
Were nowhere to be seen."

'Twas word for word a tale I'd heard
Not once or twice before,
Since first I made an axe ring out
Upon the timber hereabout,
But twenty times and more.

For many a year we've harboured here
A nest of thieves and worse,
Who watch for these young Castlemen
At night among the gorse,
It's hard to say if one in ten
Gets by with life and purse.

I wonder since 'twould serve the Prince
To square accounts with these,—
And many a score of footpads more
All like as pins or peas,
Who ply their trades in other glades
And plunder whom they please—
He does not rout the vermin out
And hang them to the trees.

But this poor lad—for me I knew
Scarce what to think or say,
I pitied him, I pitied, too,
Those cattle far away.

I asked him would he stay and be
A woodman in these woods with me,
Perhaps he did not hear,
Perhaps the dove in song above
Beside its mistress dear
Was Castle-bells and Fare-ye-wells
And hornets in his ear;
An old grey man in all but years,
He pulled his cloak about his ears,
And went I know not where.

THE SWALLOW

THE morning that my baby came
They found a baby swallow dead,
And saw a something, hard to name,
Flit moth-like over baby's bed.

My joy, my flower, my baby dear
Sleeps on my bosom well, but O!
If in the Autumn of the year
When swallows gather round to go——

A WOOD SONG

Now one and all, you Roses,
  Wake up, you lie too long!
This very morning closes
  The Nightingale his song;

Each from its olive chamber
  His babies every one
This very morning clamber
  Into the shining sun.

You Slug-a-beds and Simple
  Why will you so delay!
Dears, doff your olive wimples,
  And listen while you may.

Reason has moons, but moons not hers,
Lie mirror'd on her sea,
Confounding her astronomers,
But, O! delighting me.

. . . .

Babylon—where I go dreaming
When I weary of to-day,
Weary of a world grown grey.

God loves an idle rainbow,
No less than labouring seas.

THE BRIDE

THE book was dull, its pictures
As leaden as its lore,
But one glad, happy picture
Made up for all and more;
'Twas that of you, sweet peasant,
Beside your grannie's door—
I never stopped so startled
Inside a book before.

Just so had I sat spell-bound,
Quite still with staring eyes,
If some great shiny hoopoe
Or moth of song-bird size
Had drifted to my window
And trailed its fineries—
Just so had I been startled,
Spelled with the same surprise.

THE BRIDE

It pictured you when springtime
In part had given place
But not surrendered wholly
To summer in your face;
When still your slender body
Was all a childish grace
Though woman's richest glories
Were building there apace.

'Twas blissful so to see you,
Yet not without a sigh
I dwelt upon the people
Who saw you not as I,
But in your living sweetness,
Beneath your native sky;
Ah, bliss to be the people
When you went tripping by!

THE BRIDE

I sat there, thinking, wondering,
About your life and home,
The happy days behind you,
The happy days to come,
Your grannie in her corner,
Upstairs the little room
Where you wake up each morning
To dream all day—of Whom?

That ring upon your finger,
Who gave you that to wear?
What blushing smith or farm lad
Came stammering at your ear
A million-time-told story
No maid but burns to hear,
And went about his labours
Delighting in his dear!

THE BRIDE

I thought of you sweet lovers,
The things you say and do,
The pouts and tears and partings
And swearings to be true,
The kissings in the barley—
You brazens, both of you!
I nearly burst out crying
With thinking of you two.

It put me in a frenzy
Of pleasure nearly pain,
A host of blurry faces
'Gan shaping in my brain,
I shut my eyes to see them.
Come forward clear and plain
I saw them come full flower,
And blur and fade again.

THE BRIDE

One m ment so I saw them,
One sovereign moment so,
A host of girlish faces
All happy and aglow
With Life and Love it dealt them
Before it laid them low,
A hundred years, a thousand,
Ten thousand years ago.

One moment so I saw them
Come back with time full tide,
The host of girls, your grannies,
Who lived and loved and died
To give your mouth its beauty,
Your soul its gentle pride,
Who wrestled with the ages
To give the wo d a bride.

AFTER

"How fared you when you mortal
were?
What did you see on my peopled
star?"
"Oh well enough," I answered her,
"It went for me where mortals
are!

"I saw blue flowers and the merlin's
flight
And the rime on the wintry tree,
Blue doves I saw and summer light
On the wings of the cinnamon
bee."

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EPITAPH ON JOHNSON.

[*January* 1785.]

Here Johnson lies—a sage by all allow'd,
Whom to have bred, may well make England proud,
Whose prose was eloquence, by wisdom taught,
The graceful vehicle of virtuous thought;
Whose verse may claim—grave, masculine, and strong,
Superior praise to the mere poet's song;
Who many a noble gift from heav'n possess'd,
And faith at last, alone worth all the rest.
O man, immortal by a double prize,
By fame on earth—by glory in the skies!

TO
MISS C——, ON HER BIRTH DAY.

[1786.]

How many between east and west,
Disgrace their parent earth,
Whose deeds constrain us to detest
The day that gave them birth!

Not so when Stella's natal morn
  Revolving months restore,
We can rejoice that she was born,
  And wish her born once more!

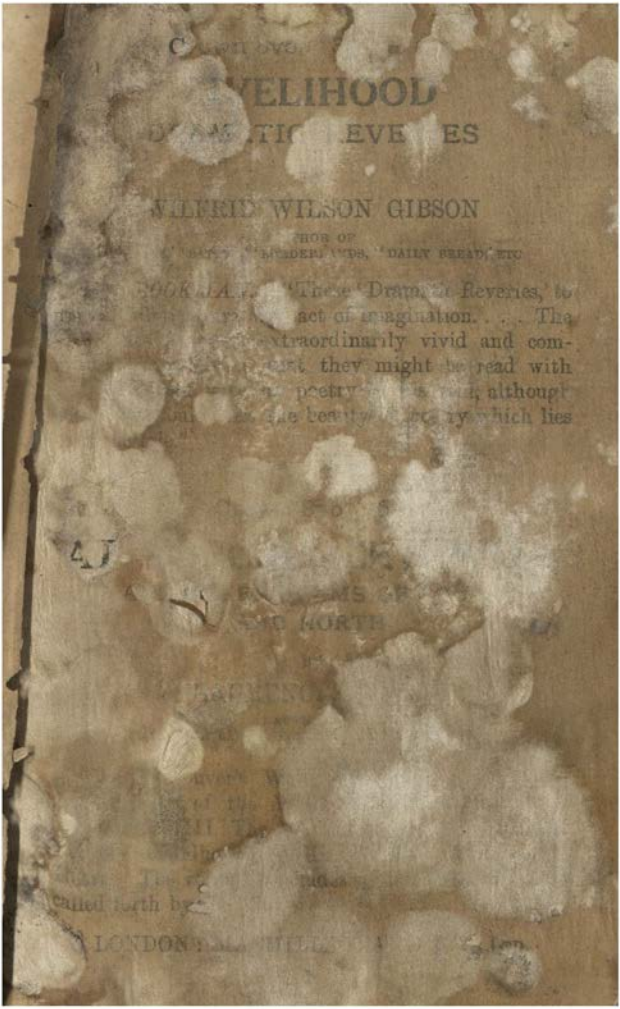
GRATITUDE.

ADDRESSED TO LADY HESKETH.

[1786.]

This cap, that so stately apears,
  With ribbon-bound tassel on high,
Which seems by the crest that it rears
  Ambitious of brushing the sky:
This cap to my cousin I owe,
  She gave it, and gave me beside,
Wreath'd into an elegant bow,
  The ribbon with which it is tied.

This wheel-footed studying chair,
  Contriv'd both for toil and repose,
Wide-elbow'd, and wadded with hair,
  In which I both scribble and dose,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WILFRID WILSON GIBSON
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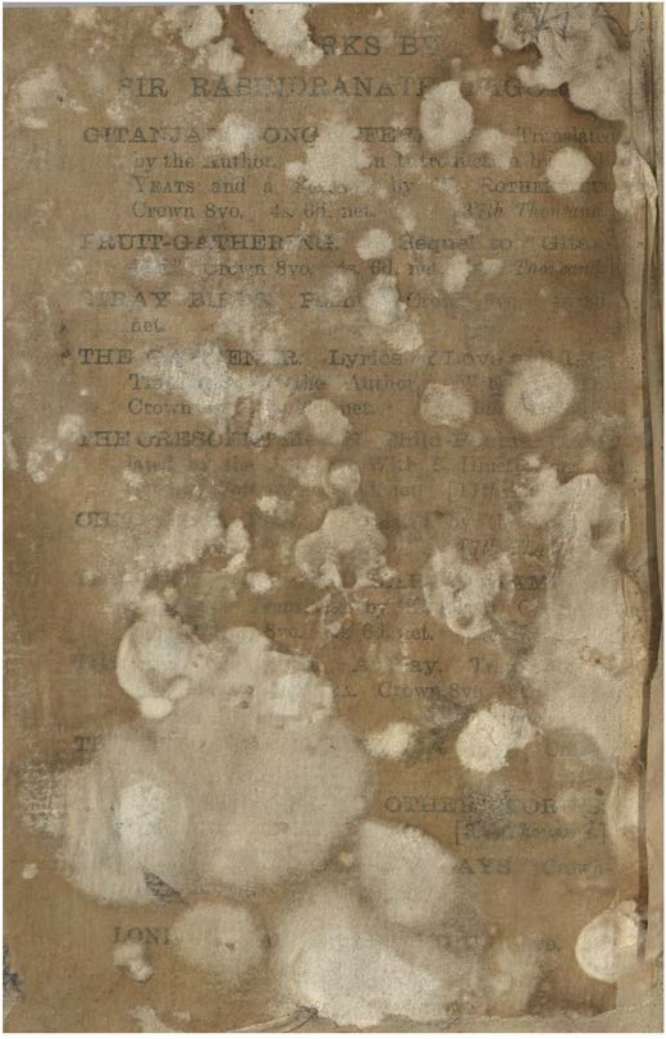

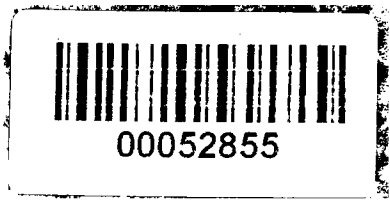

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